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DOCTOR STRANGE
MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS
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TM
HERNNER
NIGHTHAWK JOINS DR. STRANGE TO FACE THE MACABRE THREAT OF...
HE WHO STALKS!

Once he was a man like most *others*— a *worldly* man, seduced and jaded by *material* things. But then he discovered the *separate* reality, where *sorcery* and *men's souls* shaped the forces that shape our *lives*. In that instant, he was *born again*, to become a man like no other!

STAN LEE PRESENTS: Dr. STRANGE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS!™

ROGER STERN WRITER * TOM SUTTON PENCILER * ERNIE CHAN INKER * ANNETTE K. LETTERER * PETRA G. COLORIST * ARCHIE GOODWIN EDITOR

HE WHO STALKS!

AH, YES--THE MASTER IS IN, BUT--!

SHOULD I INTERRUPT THEM? MISTRESS CLEA AND THE MASTER HAVE BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH LATELY!*

THEY SO NEED THIS TIME TO THEMSELVES, AND YET...

*DR. STRANGE #23-28 & DEFENDERS #58-60--ARCH.

C-678

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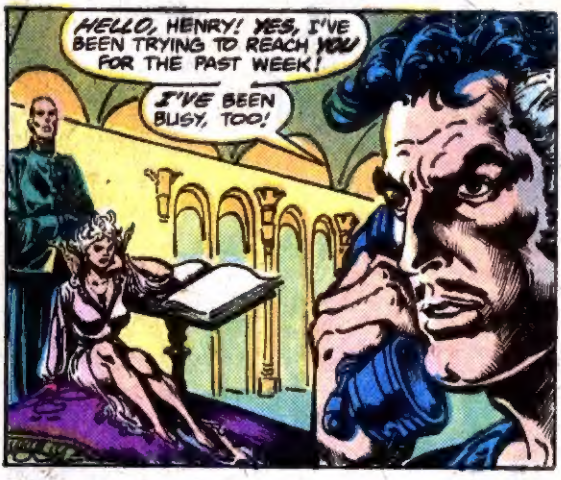
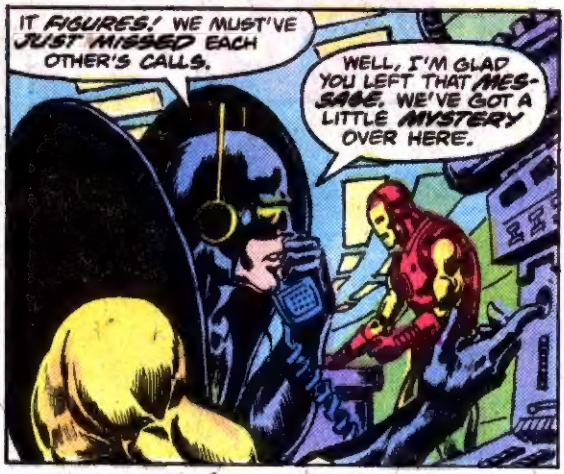
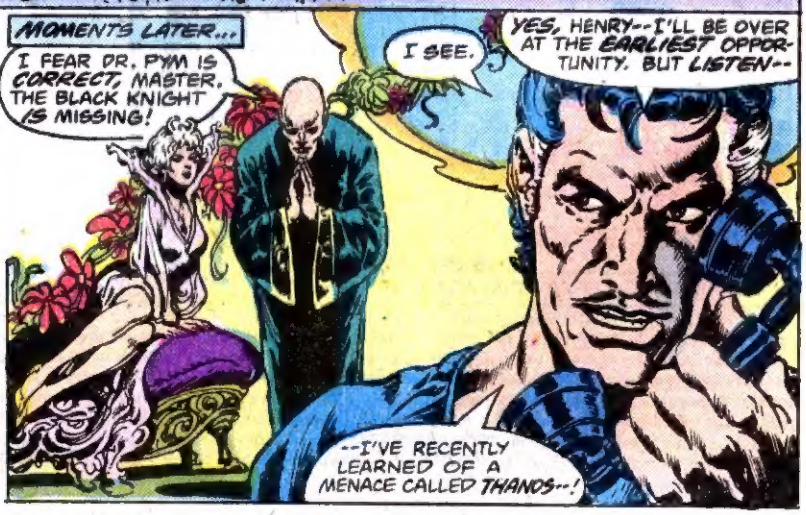
MASTER?
A THOUSAND PARDONS, BUT THAT PARTY YOU LEFT A MESSAGE FOR--?
SAY NO MORE, WONG.
THIS SHOULD TAKE ONLY A MINUTE, MY LOVE!

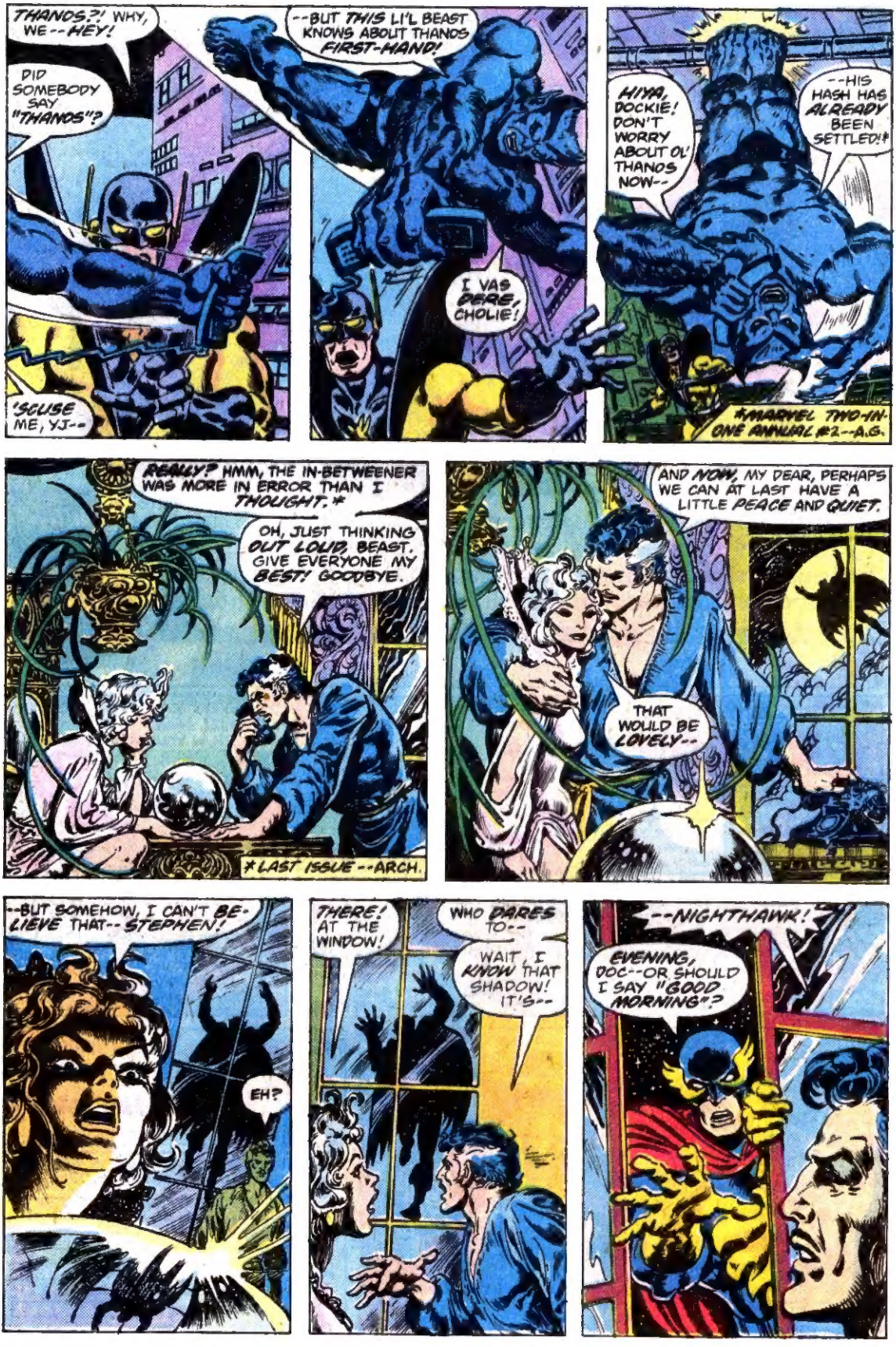

HELLO, HENRY! YES, I'VE BEEN TRYING TO REACH YOU FOR THE PAST WEEK!
I'VE BEEN BUSY, TOO!


IT FIGURES! WE MUST'VE JUST MISSED EACH OTHER'S CALLS.
WELL, I'M GLAD YOU LEFT THAT MESSAGE. WE'VE GOT A LITTLE MYSTERY OVER HERE.

ARE YOU MISSING A STATUE?
UH, YOU SEE, SOMETHING ACTIVATED THE BLACK KNIGHT'S STONE BODY RECENTLY--AND IT ATTACKED US!*
STILL NO READINGS, HANK!
* AVENGERS #157 -- ARCH.

WHAT?! BUT THAT'S--!
WONG! CHECK THE STOREROOMS AT ONCE!


MOMENTS LATER...
I FEAR DR. PYM IS CORRECT, MASTER. THE BLACK KNIGHT IS MISSING!
I SEE.
YES, HENRY--I'LL BE OVER AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY. BUT LISTEN--
--I'VE RECENTLY LEARNED OF A MENACE CALLED THANOS--!


THANOS?! WHY, WE--HEY!
DID SOMEBODY SAY "THANOS"?
'SCUSE ME, YJ--
--BUT THIS LI'L BEAST KNOWS ABOUT THANOS FIRST-HAND!
I VAS DERE, CHOLIE!
HIYA, DOCKIE! DON'T WORRY ABOUT OL' THANOS NOW--
--HIS HASH HAS ALREADY BEEN SETTLED!*
*MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE ANNUAL #2--A.G.
REALLY? HMM, THE IN-BETWEENER WAS MORE IN ERROR THAN I THOUGHT.*
OH, JUST THINKING OUT LOUD, BEAST. GIVE EVERYONE MY BEST! GOODBYE.
*LAST ISSUE--ARCH.
AND NOW, MY DEAR, PERHAPS WE CAN AT LAST HAVE A LITTLE PEACE AND QUIET.
THAT WOULD BE LOVELY--
--BUT SOMEHOW, I CAN'T BE-LIEVE THAT--STEPHEN!
EH?
THERE! AT THE WINDOW!
WHO DARES TO--
WAIT, I KNOW THAT SHADOW! IT'S--
--NIGHTHAWK!
EVENING, DOC--OR SHOULD I SAY "GOOD MORNING"?

UH...I'M NOT INTERRUPTING ANYTHING, AM I?
OH,..NO, CLEA AND I WERE JUST... RELAXING.
YES, WON'T YOU COME IN?

I'M SORRY FOR DROPPING BY SO CLOSE TO DAWN, BUT I KNEW YOU FOLKS KEPT UNUSUAL HOURS, SO...
THINK NOTHING OF IT. WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

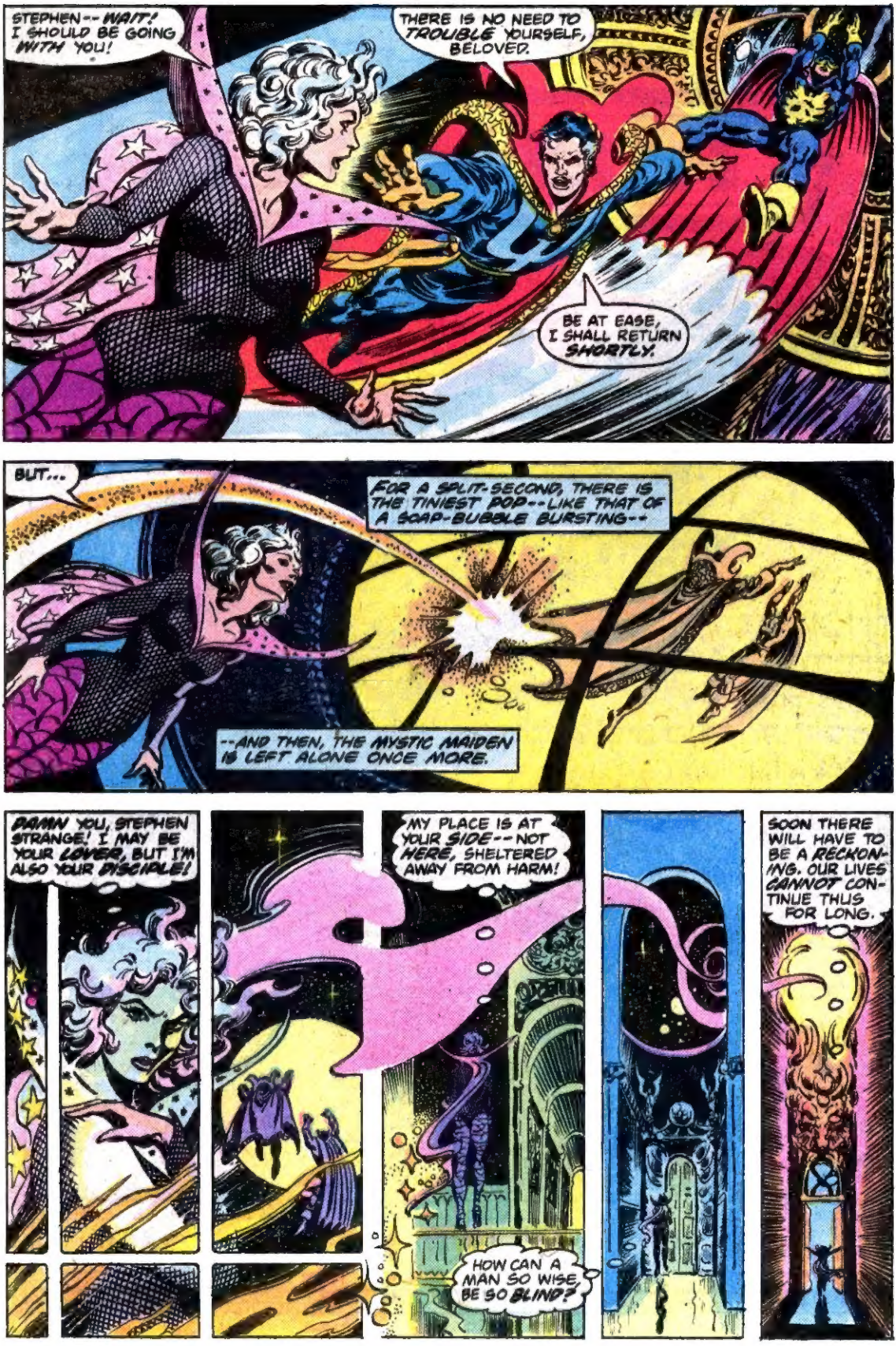
WELL, THIS ISN'T EXACTLY A SOCIAL CALL. I'VE GOT A PROBLEM ...OR RATHER, A MYSTERY.
THIS SEEMS TO BE MY EVENING FOR MYSTERIES. TELL ME ABOUT IT!

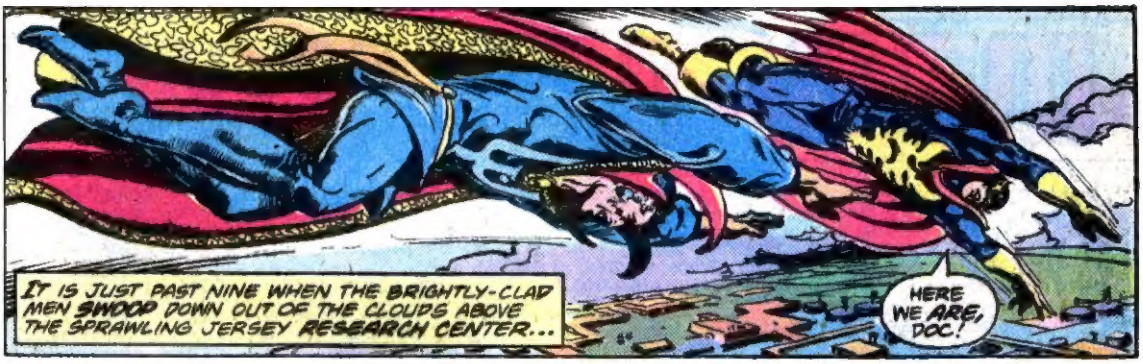
"WELL, IT ALL BEGAN A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO. AS KYLE RICHMOND, I HAVE CONTROLLING INTEREST IN A NEW JERSEY RESEARCH LAB THAT'S WORKING ON A PROTOTYPE STARDRIVE.
"RECENTLY, THE PLACE HAD BEEN PLAGUED BY SOME PRETTY UNUSUAL THEFTS, SO I DECIDED TO PLAY BOY DETECTIVE.

"HOWEVER, WHEN I STARTED QUESTIONING THE HEAD OF RESEARCH..."
LOOK, DR. THATCHER--WE CAN'T LET THESE THEFTS GO ON. IF THERE'S ANYTHING YOU CAN TELL ME--!
RICHMOND, NOTHING I COULD--I--OH, WHAT'S THE USE? I MUST TELL SOMEONE!

IT'S THE DEMONS, RICHMOND! THEY'RE THE ONES!
DEMONS?!
THEY DON'T LIKE THE NEW PROJECT! THEY'VE BEEN COMING IN THE NIGHT, STEALING COMPONENTS! THEY'VE EVEN THREATENED ME...PERSONALLY!

"NATURALLY, I THOUGHT THE OLD BOY HAD GONE OFF HIS ROCKER!
BRADLEY...DOES DR. THATCHER'S FAMILY HAVE A HISTORY OF MENTAL DISORDERS?
WHY, I DON'T--!
"BUT THEN..."
NO! NO! EYAAHH!
MY GOD.
"THATCHER'S ASSISTANT AND I IMMEDIATELY TRIED TO GET INTO THE LAB--BUT IT HAD BEEN LOCKED... BOLTED!
C'MON, MAN--PUT YOUR BACK INTO IT!
"WE FINALLY HAD TO KNOCK THE DOOR OFF ITS HINGES. THAT'S WHEN WE... FOUND THATCHER.
DEAD.
GOOD LORD! HE LOOKS LIKE HE DIED OF FRIGHT!
"IT WAS YOUR CLASSIC LOCKED ROOM, DOC--AND THERE WASN'T A MARK ON THE BODY."
THE CORONER SAID IT WAS JUST A HEART ATTACK, BUT...
BUT YOU'RE NOT SO SURE, EH?
DOC, AFTER THAT RUN-IN WITH THE AGENTS OF FORTUNE*...I DUNNO. WHAT DO YOU THINK?
*DEFENDERS # 58-60--A.G.
I THINK IT WOULDN'T HURT TO CHECK OUT THE POSSIBILITIES OF A SUPERNATURAL MURDER.
THAT'S WHAT I'D HOPED YOU'D SAY.
I WOULD BE REMISS IN MY DUTIES IF I DIDN'T LOOK INTO THIS MATTER, KYLE.
COME, LET'S BE OFF!
STEPHEN?


STEPHEN--WAIT! I SHOULD BE GOING WITH YOU!
THERE IS NO NEED TO TROUBLE YOURSELF, BELOVED.
BE AT EASE, I SHALL RETURN SHORTLY.
BUT...
FOR A SPLIT-SECOND, THERE IS THE TINIEST POP--LIKE THAT OF A SOAP-BUBBLE BURSTING--
--AND THEN, THE MYSTIC MAIDEN IS LEFT ALONE ONCE MORE.
DAMN YOU, STEPHEN STRANGE! I MAY BE YOUR LOVER, BUT I'M ALSO YOUR DISCIPLE!
MY PLACE IS AT YOUR SIDE--NOT HERE, SHELTERED AWAY FROM HARM!
HOW CAN A MAN SO WISE, BE SO BLIND?
SOON THERE WILL HAVE TO BE A RECKONING. OUR LIVES CANNOT CONTINUE THUS FOR LONG.


IT IS JUST PAST NINE WHEN THE BRIGHTLY-CLAD MEN SWOOP DOWN OUT OF THE CLOUDS ABOVE THE SPRAWLING JERSEY RESEARCH CENTER...
HERE WE ARE, DOC!

WE'D BEST TOUCH DOWN AND CHANGE TO CIVIES BEFORE WE GO ON IN.
CHANGE? AH, YES--AN EXCELLENT IDEA.

OUR INVESTIGATION WILL BE MUCH EASIER IF WE ARE LESS CONSPICUOUS.

AND SO..
EH? MR. RICHMOND! WE WEREN'T EXPECTING YOU, SIR!
AT EASE, PEOPLE.

MY...AH...CONSULTANT AND I JUST DROPPED BY FOR A LITTLE INSPECTION TOUR.
SAY, THAT REMINDS ME--I'VE GOT TO CHECK ABOUT GETTING TICKETS TO THAT NEW "DRACULA" PLAY!
UH, DOC--WHAT WERE YOU SAYING ABOUT NOT BEING CONSPICUOUS?

SHORTLY...
WELL, HERE'S THE SCENE OF THE CRIME--PRESUMING THERE WAS A CRIME. I COULDN'T BEGIN TO TELL YOU WHAT THIS MACHINERY IS FOR.
HMMM. NOT THE SORT OF PLACE ONE WOULD EXPECT TO FIND DEMONS, NOW IS IT? STILL, ONE NEVER KNOWS.

IT WILL BE SIMPLER TO DO MY KIND OF SLEUTHING IN ASTRAL FORM.
ONE NEVER KNOWS WHAT, DOC?
NOW THIS IS INTERESTING! MOST INTERESTING!
DOC? DOC, ARE YOU THERE?
I CAN DETECT NO MYSTIC FORCES, BUT THERE HAS DEFINITELY BEEN SOME SORT OF MALEVOLENT DISORDER HERE RECENTLY.
I'VE NEVER ENCOUNTERED AN AURA QUITE LIKE THIS BEFORE! PERHAPS THE ALL-SEEING EYE--!
MR. RICHMOND? MAY I COME IN?
NOK
NOK
AH, FROM KYLE'S DESCRIPTION, THIS WOULD BE THATCHER'S ASSISTANT.
GOOD MORNING, SIR. MILLIE TOLD ME YOU'D HEADED THIS WAY.
YES... I...
KYLE, WON'T YOU INTRODUCE US?
OH! DOCTOR STEPHEN STRANGE, THIS IS H. HOWARD BRADLEY. HOWARD WORKED WITH DOCTOR THATCHER.
HOW DO YOU DO, DOCTOR. ARE YOU IN PHYSICS OR--?
NO, MR. BRADLEY. YOU MIGHT SAY I DEAL WITH THE MORE OUTRÉ SCIENCES.
Y-YOU MEAN YOU'RE IN PSYCHIC RESEARCH?
SOMETHING LIKE THAT. KYLE ASKED ME TO LOOK INTO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF DR. THATCHER'S DEATH.
O-OH?
YOU SEEM RATHER UPSET, MR. BRADLEY-- WHY? DID YOU FIND DR. THATCHER'S DEATH UNUSUAL?
HEY, WHAT IS THIS? AM I UNDER SUSPICION OR SOMETHING? I DON'T HAVE TO STAND FOR THIS!
QUITE SO.

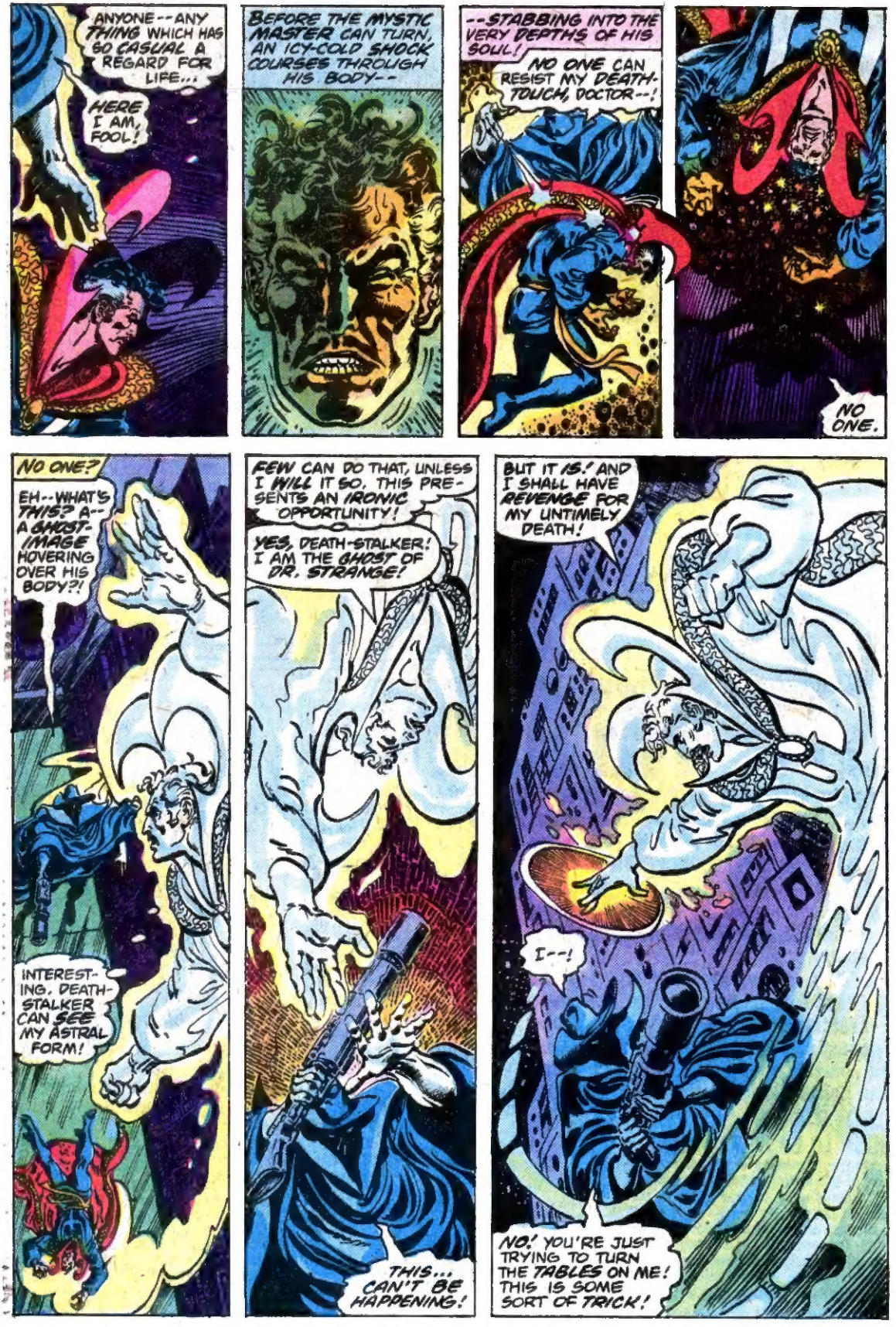
BUT YOU DO SEEM A BIT UNSETTLED, MR. BRADLEY. WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO HAVE A LITTLE... CALM?
UH?
JUST RELAX NOW. WE'RE GOING ON A LITTLE JOURNEY INTO YOUR MIND.
TH-THAT EYE! IT'S BORING INTO ME! I CAN'T GET AWAY FROM IT!
DON'T LET THE EYE TROUBLE YOU, BRADLEY--IT'S MERELY AN OBSERVER. NOW, WHAT IS WORRYING YOU?
HE--HE'S AFTER ME!
YOU ARE PURSUED?
YES, HE WANTS TO PUNISH ME!
WHO WANTS TO PUNISH YOU?
THATCHER! HIS GHOST HAS JOINED THE DEATH DEMONS!
AND HE'LL KILL ME IF I DON'T HELP HIM!
DR. THATCHER IS HAUNTING YOU?
YES! YES!
THEN I HAVE SEEN ENOUGH!
NOOOO
BE AT EASE, MR. BRADLEY-- YOU ARE AMONG FRIENDS.
JUST RELAX. THIS WILL PASS SHORTLY.
WE'D BEST LEAVE HIM FOR A WHILE, KYLE. HE'LL REMEMBER NOTHING OF THIS, OF COURSE.
OF COURSE. COME ON, WE CAN TALK OUT HERE.
SO NOW BRADLEY IS BEING BEDEVILED BY THATCHER'S GHOST?
BY HIS GHOST, OR SOMETHING CLAIMING TO BE HIS GHOST.
KYLE, THIS COULD WELL BE MORE SERIOUS THAN EITHER OF US THOUGHT.

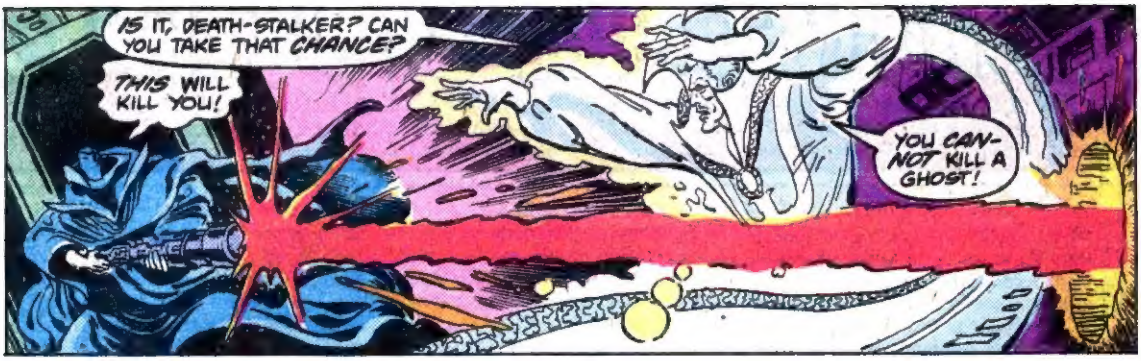
NIGHTFALL PAINTS AN EERIE PICTURE ON THIS MODERN STRUCTURE.
THE NORMALLY ANTI-SEPTIC CORRIDORS TAKE ON SHADOWS MORE MENACING THAN THOSE OF THE MOST ARCANE TEMPLES.
D-DOCTOR THATCHER?
ARE YOU HERE, SIR?
FOR HOWARD BRADLEY, THESE HALLS HOLD A SPECIAL KIND OF TERROR.
I-I HAVE THE SPACIAL DISRUPTOR, SIR.
READY.
READY FOR WHAT, BRADLEY? TO USE AGAINST ME?!
OH! N-N-NO!
THEN WHY HAVE YOU DRAWN IT? WOULD YOU ATTACK A SERVANT OF THE DEMONS?
NO! OF COURSE NOT!
WELL, THEN DON'T JUST STAND THERE, YOU SNIVELING FOOL! HELP ME LINK IT UP TO THE PROTON CONVERTER!
THEN... THIS IS THE LAST OF IT?
YES, THIS IS THE FINAL COMPONENT! ONCE THESE ELEMENTS ARE LINKED, THE NETHERWORLD WILL PLAGUE YOU NO MORE!
THAT'S MIGHTY BIG OF YA, PAL! HOPE YOU'LL PARDON ME IF I DON'T SHAKE IN MY BOOTS!
NIGHTHAWK! GRAB BRADLEY-- QUICKLY!
THIS BEING IS FAR MORE DANGEROUS THAN ANY MERE SPIRIT!

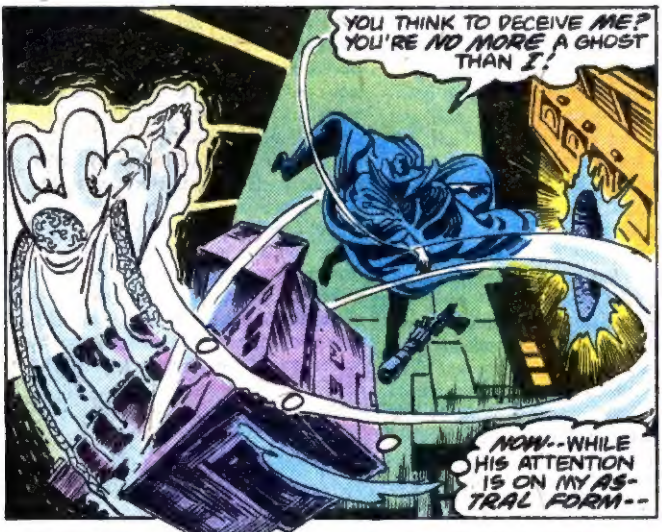
CONSIDER HIM GRABBED, DOC! BUT WHAT'S THE SCORE ON GHOSTY HERE?
THE IMAGE OF THATCHER'S GHOST IS A SHAM!
AND NO DECEPTION CAN LONG STAND UNDER THE SEARING LIGHT OF AGAMOTTO!
NOT EVEN THE ETHEREAL DISGUISE OF THE BANDIT CALLED DEATH-STALKER!*
WHAT?!
*LAST SEEN IN DAREDEVIL #152 --A.G.

DEATH-STALKER, HUH? YOU'RE THE CLOWN WHO'S GIVEN DAREDEVIL SO MUCH TROUBLE!
WELL, HERE'S WHERE I DO OL' DD A FAVOR!
NO, WAIT!
YOU WOULD DO WELL TO HEED THE WARNING OF YOUR ODDLY GARBED FRIEND, NIGHTHAWK!
NONE MAY TOUCH THE PERSON OF DEATH-STALKER!
WHA--?
THUD!
I HAVE HAD QUITE ENOUGH OF INTERFERENCE FROM YOU AND YOUR ILK!
L-LORD! HIS GRIP IS LIKE I-ICE! P-PARALYZING!
THANK YOUR GOD THAT I AM NOT IN A KILLING MOOD TONIGHT!
BAH! YOU ARE BARELY WORTHY OF MY NOTICE! HERE--JOIN YOUR FRIEND--
--WHILE I ADD THIS LITTLE TRINKET TO MY COLLECTION!
WITH THIS, DEATH-STALKER WILL BECOME TRULY INVINCABLE!
THEN, WHILE DR. STRANGE STILL STANDS, SUCH POWER SHALL BE DENIED YOU!
EH?

YOU--YOU THREW SOME SORT OF FORCE FIELD AROUND THE DISRUPTOR WITH A MERE GESTURE!
CLEARLY, YOU ARE A GREATER THREAT THAN YOU APPEAR!
A PITY THAT I ALREADY HAVE THE MEANS TO DESTROY YOU!
INDEED, VILLAIN?
EVEN WHEN THESE "MERE GESTURES" CAN PROTECT ME AS WELL?
YES! YES! I CAN INCREASE THE POWER A HUNDREDFOLD!
BY THE VISHANTI, MY SHIELD BEGINS TO CRUMBLE UNDER HIS BEAM!
ONLY HAVE TIME FOR ONE RECOURSE...
'FORE THE GATHERING DOOM MAY MY POWER NEVER YIELD, LET THE WINDS OF WATOOMB STRENGTHEN SERAPHIM'S SHIELD!
INCREDIBLE! YOU DEFLECTED THE BEAM'S HIGHEST INTENSITY SETTING!
BUT YOU HAVE ALSO PROVIDED ME AN EXIT! THIS BATTLE IS FAR FROM OVER, STRANGE!
RUNNING AWAY? I WOULD NOT EXPECT SUCH CAUTION FROM A BEING WHO CAN BECOME INTANGIBLE WITH A THOUGHT.
NEVERTHELESS, I CANNOT LET HIM ROAM LOOSE WITH THAT WEAPON OF HIS.
HE'S ALREADY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH OF DR. THATCHER--
--AND DOUBTLESS HE WOULD HAVE KILLED BRADLEY AS WELL.
I MUST BE ON MY GUARD WITH SUCH A CREATURE AROUND.


ANYONE--ANY THING WHICH HAS SO CASUAL A REGARD FOR LIFE...
HERE I AM, FOOL!
BEFORE THE MYSTIC MASTER CAN TURN, AN ICY-COLD SHOCK COURSES THROUGH HIS BODY--
--STABBING INTO THE VERY DEPTHS OF HIS SOUL!
NO ONE CAN RESIST MY DEATH-TOUCH, DOCTOR--!
NO ONE.
NO ONE?
EH--WHAT'S THIS? A--A GHOST-IMAGE HOVERING OVER HIS BODY?!
INTERESTING. DEATH-STALKER CAN SEE MY ASTRAL FORM!
FEW CAN DO THAT, UNLESS I WILL IT SO. THIS PRESENTS AN IRONIC OPPORTUNITY!
YES, DEATH-STALKER! I AM THE GHOST OF DR. STRANGE!
THIS... CAN'T BE HAPPENING!
BUT IT IS! AND I SHALL HAVE REVENGE FOR MY UNTIMELY DEATH!
I--!
NO! YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO TURN THE TABLES ON ME! THIS IS SOME SORT OF TRICK!

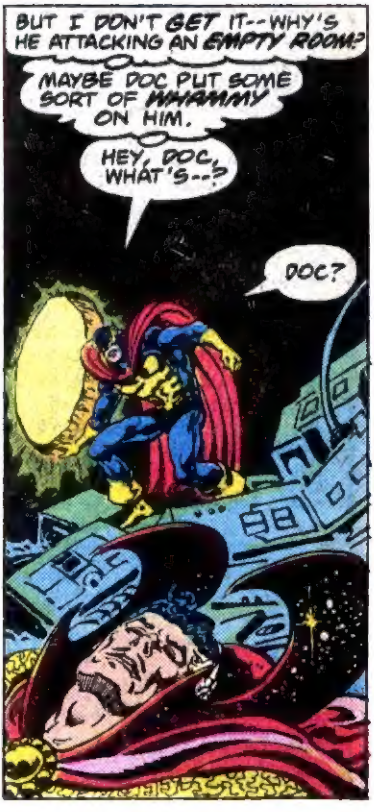

IS IT, DEATH-STALKER? CAN YOU TAKE THAT CHANCE?
THIS WILL KILL YOU!
YOU CAN-NOT KILL A GHOST!


YOU THINK TO DECEIVE ME? YOU'RE NO MORE A GHOST THAN I!
NOW--WHILE HIS ATTENTION IS ON MY AS-TRAL FORM--

"--I MUST CONCENTRATE...TELEPORT MY BODY OUT OF HARM'S WAY!"
HUH? DOC? WHERE'D YOU POP IN FROM?

I THOUGHT THAT-- HOLY--! WHAT'S GOING ON? HAS STALKY GONE CRAZY OR WHAT?

DIE, BLAST YOU! DIE!!
WHEW! HE'S NOT QUITE IN THE HULK'S WEIGHT CLASS, BUT HE'LL DO!


BUT I DON'T GET IT--WHY'S HE ATTACKING AN EMPTY ROOM?
MAYBE DOC PUT SOME SORT OF HAAMMY ON HIM.
HEY, DOC, WHAT'S--?
DOC?

DOC! OMIGOD, DON'T TELL ME HE--!
NO--THANK GOD! I THINK HE'S JUST IN A TRANCE!
EH?
SO, STRANGE--YOUR FRIEND AND YOUR BODY SEEM TO BE UNHARMED! HOW NICE FOR THEM.
UNFORTUNATELY, THEY WON'T STAY THAT WAY FOR LONG!
NO!
AND IN THE SPLIT-SECOND IT TAKES DEATH-STALKER TO TRIGGER HIS WEAPON--
HEY!
--THE MYSTIC EYE FLIES FORTH, FIRST DEFLECTING THE DEADLY BEAM--
WITH THE URGENCY OF THAT ONE LONE THOUGHT, THE AMULET AT STRANGE'S THROAT OPENS ONCE AGAIN!
--AND THEN, WITH A SPEED RIVALLING THAT OF LIGHT ITSELF, IT DOUBLES BACK TO MEET THE DESTRUCTIVE ENERGY HEAD-ON--
--FORCING IT BACK...
...BACK...
...BACK!
NO! IT IS NOT POSSIBLE!

THAT EYE-- IT... IT'S CHANNELING THE ENERGY BACK INTO THE-- NO!
KA-
BLAM
AND WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARS...
D-DOC?
YES, KYLE?
I THINK WE WON.
AFTER THE TWO HAVE SEEN TO BRADLEY'S SAFETY...
ALL THAT'S LEFT OF DEATH-STALKER IS HIS HAT. I GUESS THAT BRINGS THIS LITTLE MYSTERY TO A CLOSE.
I... WOULDN'T SAY THAT, KYLE.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, DOC?
WE STILL DO NOT KNOW WHO DEATH-STALKER WAS--OR HIS MOTIVES.
AND I AM NOT CERTAIN WE HAVE EVEN HEARD THE LAST OF HIM.
IF ANYTHING, I'D SAY WE HAVE A BIGGER MYSTERY NOW THAN WE DID BEFORE.
NEXT ISSUE: A GATHERING OF FEAR!